

Message Text

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PAGE 01 THE HA 05332 051725Z

44

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 NEA-10 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

ACDA-19 IO-14 OMB-01 DRC-01 EA-11 /144 W

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O R 051514Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2518

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 5332

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NL, XF

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER STATES THERE NO CHANGE

IN GON MIDDLE EAST POLICY

1. SUMMARY: IN PARLIAMENT DEC 5, FOREIGN MINISTER
VAN DER STOEL VEHEMENTLY DENIED THERE HAD BEEN A CHANGE
IN GON'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY AS WIDELY REPORTED IN MEDIA.
HE SAID MEDIA REPORTS WERE BASED ON ERRONEOUS UNDERSTANDING
OF MFA SPOKESMAN AT REGULARLY SCHEDULED BACKGROUND
BRIEFING DEC. 4. FOREIGN MINISTER WAS CRITICIZED BY
OPPOSITION LIBERALS FOR INEPT PRESENTATION GON MIDDLE
EAST POLICY BUT ALSO BY HIS ONW LABOR PARTY FOR ALLOWING
MFA FUNCTIONARY TO CREATE IMPRESSION GON, LIKE JAPANESE,
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PAGE 02 THE HA 05332 051725Z

HAD SUCCUMBED TO ARAB BLACKMAIL. END SUMMARY.

2. FOREIGN MINISTER VAN DER STOEL APPEARED IN PARLIAMENT DEC 5 FOR SPECIAL DISCUSSION OF DUTCH ME POLICY. CAUSE OF SPECIAL SESSION WAS REGULARLY SCHEDULED BACKGROUND BRIEFING FOR PRESS DEC 4 AT WHICH MFA SPOKESMAN TOLD PRESS GON POSITION WAS THAT ISRAEL SHOULD WITHDRAW FROM ALL "THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES". SPOKESMAN REPORTEDLY TERMED ISRAELI OCCUPATION "ILLEGAL." PRESS CHOSE TO INTERPRET SPOKESMAN'S COMMENTS AS DRAMATIC CHANGE IN GON FOREIGN POLICY. SPOKESMAN TRIED TO UNDO DAMAGE LATER IN DAY BY STRESSING HIS REMARKS NOT MEANT TO CONVEY IMPRESSION GON POLICY HAD CHANGED, BUT DAMAGE HAD BEEN DONE. IN SESSION WITH PRESS IN BRUSSELS DEC 4, FOREIGN MINISTER ALSO DENIED ANY CHANGE IN DUTCH ME POLICY.

3. REACTING TO NEWS LATE DEC 4, SECOND CHAMBER FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN DANKERT WAS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF MINISTRY. HE SUGGESTED VAN DER STOEL'S BUREAUCRACY MIGHT BE TRYING TO SANDBAG HIM AND FORCE CHANGE IN POLICY. OTHER LABOR SPOKESMEN (INCLUDING FLOOR LEADER VAN THIJN) ALSO SUGGESTED SPOKESMAN MIGHT BE BEING USED BY TOP MINISTRY OFFICIALS WHO DISAGREED WITH MINISTER'S POLICY.

4. IN CHAMBER SESSION DEC. 5 DANKERT, SPEAKING ALSO FOR KVP, ARP AND D'66, ASKED MINISTER FOR UNEQUIVOCAL STATEMENT THERE HAD BEEN NO CHANGE IN GON POLICY AND ALSO FOR EXPLANATION ON HOW MFA SPOKESMAN COULD HAVE COMMITTED THIS KIND OF GAFFE. DANKERT SAID NO MATTER WHAT VAN DER STOEL SAID, HARM HAD BEEN DONE AND IT HAD BEEN MADE TO APPEAR THE DUTCH LIKE THE JAPANESE HAD BOWED TO ARAB BLACKMAIL. OPPOSITION SPOKESMEN DE KOSTER AND WIEGEL (LIBERALS) AND KRUISINGA (CHU) SAID THIS WAS LATEST INSTANCE OF INEPT HANDLING OF ME QUESTION BY MINISTER VAN DER STOEL. OPPOSITION WAS ALSO CRITICAL OF MINISTER LUBBERS' REMARKS IN BRUSSELS DEC 1. TO EFFECT THAT GON HAD NOT COME THERE TO "BUY OIL ON A SATURDAY." IN HIS REPLY, FONMIN REFERRED TO DUTCH ACCEPTANCE OF EC'S ME DECLARATION, HIS WHITE PAPER (THE HAGUE 5068) AND STATEMENT IN PARLIAMENT LAST WEEK (THE HAGUE 5261). HE REGRETTED MISUNDERSTANDING BRIEFING HAD CAUSED AND CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 THE HA 05332 051725Z

STRESSED THAT IT HAD NOT BEEN AN EFFORT TO CHANGE DUTCH POLICY BY THE BACK DOOR.

5. COMMENT: FOREIGN AFFAIRS EDITOR FOR SOCIALIST DAILY HET PAROOL, WHO WAS AT YESTERDAY'S BACKGROUND SESSION, SAID HE AND SEVERAL OTHERS HAD BEGUN PRESSURE MFA SPOKESMAN FOR FULLER EXPLANATION OF ME POLICY AND SPOKESMAN INSTEAD OF BREAKING OFF DISCUSSION GOT OUT FURTHER AND FURTHER ON LIMB.

EDITOR SAID SPOKESMAN WAS IMPROVISING AND NOT READING FROM ANY PREPARED STATEMENT. QUESTION IS WHY DID MFA SPOKESMAN, WHO IS CAUTIOUS AND EXPERIENCED, ALLOW HIMSELF TO BE MANEUVERED INTO A POSITION IN WHICH IT WOULD APPEAR GON MAKING A MAJOR FOREIGN POLICY CHANGE. DOUBTS ON THIS POINT HAVE SUGGESTED SOMEWHAT BYZANTINE EXPLANATION THAT SPOKESMAN BEING USED BY MINISTRY HIGHER-UPS TO FORCE POLICY CHANGE WHETHER VAN DER STOEL WANTED CHANGE OR NOT. ON THE OTHER HAND, A SENIOR MFA OFFICIAL TOLD DCM THAT SPOKESMAN'S REMARKS DID NOT REFLECT ANY INTENT TO CHANGE DUTCH POLICY EVEN SLIGHTLY. HE PROFESSED NOT TO UNDERSTAND WHAT ALL THE FUSS WAS ABOUT. NO MATTER THE REAL EXPLANATION IT IS CLEAR, AS DANKERT POINTED OUT, THAT DAMAGE HAS BEEN DONE AND THE PRESTIGE OF BOTH THE MINISTER AND MINISTRY HAVE SUFFERED.

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